

## **CHAPTER-V**

Linguistic Question : A Cultural Resurgence

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### LINGUISTIC QUESTION: A CULTURAL RESURGENCE.

Language is one of the major issues of socio-cultural aspect of a community. The language/ dialect of Northeastern part of India is genetically of the eastern group of the Indo- Aryan family (along with, at least Oriya, Bangla and Assamiya) with in the member of the Putative Bengali- Assames sub- group .<sup>1</sup> There is a general view among the scholars that this language/ dialect is spoken in East Purnea district of Bihar, Morang and Jhapa districts of Nepal; Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Darjeeling and Dinajpur ,Malda districts of West Bengal ; the old Goalpara district of Assam (now Dhubri, Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, Goalpara); Rangpur, Dinajpur and Mymensingh district of Bangladesh.<sup>2</sup> The spoken language of the Rajbanshi people has been identified in various way such as northern dialect of Bengali,<sup>3</sup> Goalparia dialect of Assamese,<sup>4</sup> Kamta,<sup>5</sup> Kamrupi,<sup>6</sup> Deshi,<sup>7</sup> Kamtai language,<sup>8</sup> Kamta Behari<sup>9</sup> etc. Sir George A. Grierson in his *Linguistic Survey of India* has first mentioned the language used by the Rajbanshis of Rangpur, Darjeeling, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, and Goalpara as a separate dialect. <sup>10</sup> He named this dialect as 'Rajbanshi' since this is spoken mostly by the Rajbanshis but he considered it a dialect of Bengali itself.<sup>11</sup> Rajbanshi dialect according to Grierson "belong to the eastern variety of the language, has still points of different, which entitle it to be classes as a separate dialect. It has one sub- dialect called 'Bahe' spoken in the Darjeeling *Teari*." <sup>12</sup> Grierson also argued that the Koches who adopted Hinduism and Islam generally speak the Rajbanshi dialect and it is called the 'Rangpuri'. <sup>13</sup>

## I

After Grierson the distinguish linguists like Dr. Sunity Kumar Chatterjee , Dr. Sukumar Sen followed by Dr. Nirmalendu Bhowmick and Dr. Nirmal Das etel. had dealt with linguistic and literary analysis of this language. Dr. Sunity Kumar Chatterjee and Dr. Sukumar Sen preferred to call this language 'Kamrupi' judged by its regional characteristics. Dr. Nirmal Das while dealing with the naming of the language preferred to follow them. Dr. Das has pointed out that the name 'Rajbanshi' for this language would lead to two errors –errors of exclusion and error of inclusion.<sup>14</sup> Many other residents of the then Kamrup region such as Muslims, Khens, Yogis and even the Brahmins of Khagrabari area of Cooch Behar district used to speak this language as their mother tongue and hence these people will be excluded by naming the language as 'Rajbanshi'. On the other hand, there are Rajbanshi in Midnapur, 24 Paraganas, Hoogly and Nadia districts who may not be of the same stock and do not speak this language but therefore, preferred to call it 'Kamrupi'.<sup>15</sup>

Upendra Nath Barman, a adroit politician and social leader of the Rajbanshi community was in favour of the name of 'Rajbanshi'.<sup>16</sup> Ray Sahib Panchanan Barman, the most dominant socio-political leader popularly known as the father of the *Kshatriya* movement called it 'Kamta Behari', Purnendu Mohan Sehanobis, a veteran member of *Rangpur Sahitya Parisad* also followed him. Very recently Dharma Narayan Barma in his work entitled, *A Step of Kamta Bihari Language*, called it as 'Kamta Bihari'.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand ,Dr. Dwijendra Nath Bhakat in his work, *Rajbanshi Bhasha Sahityer Parichaya*, traced the

existence of the Rajbanshi language since seventh century. He argued that there are similarities between the Rajbanshi and the language used in the copper plate grants of ancient Kamrupa.<sup>18</sup> Dr. Bhakat also claims that the literature produced under the patronage of the Koch Kings are the specimen of the Rajbanshi literature.<sup>19</sup> The term 'Rajbanshi' has been proved by some scholars in their writings being named as such as *The Rajbansis of North Benagl* of Dr. C.C.Sanyal, *The Indo- Aryan language of Masica Colin*; *Atlas of the languages and Ethnic Communities of South Asia* of Roland J.L. Brovetor .

A section of the Rajbanshi people however, did not accept the title 'Rajbanshi dialect'. The term 'Rajbanshi (alternatively 'Rajvamsi') etymologically means 'royal lineage' and is associated with Hinduisation of the Koch tribe and the movement to bring them inside the caste system as 'Kshatriyas', (the warrior and royal caste) rather than as a scheduled or lower caste.<sup>20</sup> Dr. Rajat Subhra Mukhopadhyaya suggests that the Koch King Viswa Singha (1496-1533) may have been the first to take this title when he converted to Hinduism. He goes on to say that not all the inhabitants of the old kingdom of Kamatapur followed their king in converting to Hinduism, but that most of the poorer Koches being refused a descent status under the Hindu regime, however, adopted Islam.<sup>21</sup> The Koch King ruled over the kingdom of Kamatapur from 1510 until 1773 when full sovereignty was surrendered to the British.

Over the past century the term 'Kamatapuri' has been put forward by community leaders in North Bengal as a name for the speech of the original inhabitants of North Bengal which encompasses both Rajbanshi and *deshi Musalmans* (indigenous Muslims). A number of Rajbanshi intellectuals have considered the language spoken by them

recognize as 'Kamatapuri'. The Rajbanshi intellectual like Kalindra Nath Barman,<sup>22</sup> Harimohan Barman,<sup>23</sup> Nikhil Ray<sup>24</sup> Dharma Narayan Barma<sup>25</sup> called it as 'Kamatapuri language'.

On the contrary, a number of experts have opined that it is yet another dialect of Bengali and both share the name root. Dr Nirmal Das in his work *Uttar Banger Bhasha Prasanga* categorically argued that the 'Rajbanshi' is nothing but another dialect of Bengali.<sup>26</sup> However, it cannot be denied that the dialect variations of a code always suffer from negligence and suppression by the standard form of that code. In this respect, 'Rajbanshi' is nothing but a dialect of Bengali. However, there is no standard format of this so-called 'Kamatapuri/ Rajbanshi' language.

## II

Whatever the status of the language spoken by the Rajbanshi either it is a dialect of Bengali or a distinct separate language called 'Rajbanshi or Kamatapuri' is a debatable issue and it needs a critical explanation. The present works would not be taken to complete the linguistic exploration by any means. Rather this work is intended to explore how did a linguistic question geared up the cultural resurgence among the Rajbanshis.

As mentioned earlier the linguistic 'Pandits' have not accepted that the language spoken by the Rajbanshi is not a distinctive language but dialect of Bengali. This is to be mentioned in this context that some research scholars and writers have termed this language as 'Bahe'. They partially followed Grierson who had given this name 'Bahe'

to the variation and formed of the dialect as spoken by the Rajbanshis of the *Terai* area of Darjeeling which numbered 47345 only at that time; but the scholars following wrongly indicated this name 'Bahe' to the language (dialect) itself spoken by the entire Rajbanshi population Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Rangpur, Goalpara which numbered 3509171 at that time.<sup>27</sup>

Table:5:1: Rajbanshi speaking people.

Name of the District	Number of spoken
Jalpaiguri	568976
Rangpur	2037460
Cooch Behar(Native State)	562500
Darjeeling (Bahe sub dialect)	47435
Goalpara	292800
Grant total	3509171

The other caste scholars called the Rajbanshis as "They are known as 'Bahes' of the Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar district" and "Bahe society and economy". This is almost case of naming of 'Genes' on the basis of 'species' and hence quite fallacious.

Moreover, there are inherent fallacies in the naming itself from the viewpoint of the meaning of the 'Bahe'. 'Bahe' is the shorter form of the vocative 'Babahe'. One should consider if it is judicious and proper to call a language group 'Bahe' and to call the speakers of the language 'Bahe' caste just because they use the vocative word 'Bahe'. That in addition, this word 'Bahe' is not used universally to address anybody and every body. The word 'Bahe' is used by the Rajbanshis to address the persons of paternal/ maternal and son/ daughter relations of affectional and love. It is not used for addressing the persons of brotherly or sisterly relations. For example, a person with the relation and status of

uncle will address the nephew like persons, 'O Bahe, how are you? /what is going on?' etc. Similarly, the nephew will address in reply in the same manner, "No, Bahe, the situation is not alright." However, a person with brotherly relation will never address his brother or sister, "O Bahe, how are you?" This is appropriate use of the word 'Bahe'. Not only that, the word when used conveys sense of respect and honour. When the word 'Bahe', is used by any unfamiliar or less familiar person with unlined relationship, it demands proper use of the verb conveying the respect. For, example, 'ki Bahe shak becheba na ki?' will a wrong one. The appropriate form of the verb will be "Bechaiben" instead of 'Becheba' conveying due respect and honour to the addressee. These subtle features of very many words in 'Kamrupi/Rajbanshi/ Kamtai' speech form are not known to the people belonging to the communities other than those speaking the language for age.<sup>29</sup>

Unfortunately, the persons who are unpopular with this spoken language often venture to use these words on inappropriate occasions with inappropriate verbs and create problems. That they may not know the words 'Bahe', 'Bou', 'Bapoi', etc. used only for addressing the paternally related affectionate ones. They think 'Bahe' can be used for addressing anybody. It is to be mentioned here that Grierson called the sub-dialect 'Bahe' because of his ignorance about the characteristic and actual meaning of the word. Moreover, the information collecting the supply the information for his suffered from the same deficiency. The Government employees through whom Grierson collected the informations were mainly from the South Bengal and East Bengal, having little of knowledge about the local language. It is seen from his report that the interpreter for Jalpaiguri district and Terai area of Darjeeling district

were 'Baboo' Murlidhar Roy Choudhury and 'Baboo' Prasanna Chandra Dutta respectively. <sup>30</sup>

This 'Baboo' class of people used to look down upon the Rajbanshi poor peasants and the language used by them and naturally having little respect for the language never cared to know the actual inner meaning of the word 'Bahe'. The implication of such an imagination also did never occur to their mind. However, the scholars and researchers seldom keep this matter in mind and intentionally or unintentionally create social tension by wrong interpretation of such words and phrases. The scholars of other caste used the word 'Bahe' inappropriately in their literature such as in *Mahakaler Rather Ghora* by Samaresh Basu. Social tension thus grew among the Rajbanshis and they recognize the non-Rajbanshis as 'Bhatia' (coming from East Pakistan, now Bangladesh) and a movement called 'Bhatia Khedao' organized by Satish Chandra Singh Ray. Though it was not succeeded, the Rajbanshis strongly protest against such behaviour of the caste Hindus. However, this practice of the caste Hindus is going on further more. In this context, the latest incident refers to the commonest of Dr. Asit Kumar Bandopadhyaya in his work where he made improper and inappropriate use of the word 'Bahe' that hurt the sentiment of the Rajbanshis of North Bengal. Not only this, Shri Bondopadhyaya, going a step forward, commented that the Rajbanshis and the 'Santhals' are not the Bengalese even. <sup>31</sup> Such comments of Shri Bondopadhyaya about a large community of West Bengal gave rise to widespread commotion meeting, slogans signature campaign organized by the scholars, teachers, students, and socio-political workers of North Bengal irrespective of caste and creed. <sup>32</sup>

Taking clue from the comment of Sri Bondopadhyaya, the separatist of the Uttar Khanda Movement of North Bengal had been started. The word 'Bahe' has thus open been very sensitive one leading to various kinds of socio- political problems in the past but even than some of the scholars and researchers use this word indiscriminately and cause disturbances in the social amity amongst various communities in the areas. It helped in formulating the sentiments, which are otherwise taken advantage of by unscrupulous political and so-called social leaders. Thus, a section of Rajbanshi people has been demanding a separate state with the recognition of their distinct language and culture. However, the then Deputy Chief Minister Sri Buddhadeb Bhattacharya (Now the Chief Minister of West Bengal) has given a speech in the Newspaper like this "But this time, Kamatapur protagonist under the Kamatapur People Party (KPP) and the KLO, have revived the agitation by raising illogical and baseless" issues like "Kamatapur is a different language, and Rajbanshi culture". He added that Rajbanshis were Bengalese and their language was one of the odd Bengali dialects .<sup>33</sup>

The question remains for those who propagate the 'Kamatapuri' language community whether there are not in fact lower levels of diversity that should be classified as distinct languages. In the current political context there is, however, no desire among 'Kamatapuri' leaders to draw attention to heterogeneity within the 'Kamatapuri' language seeing as the request for the creation of a Kamatapur state is based on the principle of linguistic homogeneity. While this heterogeneity is currently seen to be erroneous and irrelevant, it is foreseeable that this would become a bigger issue were they in fact to receive their request for a separate state.

A central aspect of debate regarding language is debates over history. Apte describe the importance of history in the *History of the Indian language Debates* of 1950s;

“It is interesting to note the types of arguments presented by the MPs for claiming various linguistically complex border areas for their respective future linguistic states. Many used historical evidence and in this were challenged by others. The issues even came down to such specifics as which kings belonged to which linguistic region. One MP for example, claimed that a famous king by the name of Krishna Deva Raya was a Telegu King and the statement was immediately challenged by the Tamil and Kanada MPs, each group claiming the king to be from their linguistic region.”<sup>34</sup>

History has been of analogous importance in the Bengali/ ‘Kamatapuri’ language ideological debate. Firstly, we may quote from Dr.S.K.Chatterji’s *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*; “Political and Social reasons have brought about the present unity of speech in Bengal, despite the fact of dialect. From the time of the Palas (8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.), the greater part of Bengal formed portions of one empire.... It (the communal unity) had not been brought about by some sort of political union under the Palas just when the foundations of the Bengali language were laid ... The evolution of a common nationality and of one type of culture and literature among the people of heterogeneous origin in West Bengal, (East Bengal in North Bengal) would have been extremely problematic. There would have grown up, linguistically and culturally three ‘Bengals’ like ‘Radha’, ‘Varendra’, and ‘Vanga.”<sup>35</sup> According to Gait, the Kingdom of Kamrup reigned in today’s North Bengal from the 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century judging from the records left by Hieun Tsang- a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who visited

Kamrupa around 639 A.D. the Kingdom of Kamrupa included most of what is today known as Assam, Bhutan, as well as North Bengal. The Western Border of Kamrupa right through this period seems to have been stubble at the Karotoya river <sup>36</sup>, which would thus, included the current day districts of Koch Behar, Jalpaiguri, and Rangpur. The Western district of Kamrupa kingdom was alternatively named Koch Behar or Kamatapur. The latter seems to have been strictly speaking the name of the district capital (presently Cooch Behar town), though was also used to refer to the whole district.<sup>37</sup> According to some scholars like Cunningham, Kamatapur was the richest part of the Kamarupa kingdom, and became for some time the residence of the kings.

The Kamrupa Kingdom, including today's North Bengal of West Bewngal, was conquered in the early 12<sup>th</sup> Century by Ram Paul (of the Pala Dynasty referred to by that originated to the south –west of Kamrupa in today's Malda district). The conquest of Kamrupa by 'Gauda' was however, only short lived and only served to disintegrate the Kamrupa kingdom into a number of separate kingdoms. Gait maintains that the western district of the old Kamrupa kingdom formed into a separate kingdom during this time, under the name of Kamata, or Kamrupa.

During thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the rulers from Bengal; the first three invaders-Muhammad Bin Bakhtiyar in 1205AD, Hisammuddin Iwaj in 1227 AD, Malik Yasbeg in 1257AD enjoyed only temporary victory before being repelled by the Kamatapur kings invaded Kamatapur for times. The forth invader, Alauddin Hussain Shah, however, overthrew the Khyan Dynasty of Kamatapur kings in 1498, and ruled over Kamatapur for a time, until an attempt was made to invade Assam

(which by now had come under the Ahoms). The Ahoms destroyed the Mohammedan army, and today's North Bengal of West Bengal was left for a time without a king, being instead ruled by petty independent chiefs.<sup>38</sup>

Around 1510-15 AD, a Koch chief named Biswa Singha grew in power and established a kingdom that controlled all of today's North Bengal, *Terai* (up to and including Morang in Nepal) as well as the districts of Goalpara and Kamrupa in today's Assam. The capital of the Koch kingdom was at Kamatapur, the contemporary town of Koch Behar. After Biswa Singha the kingdom was ruled by his successors while his brother Sukladhaj also known as Chila Ray became governor of the area to the east of the river Sankosh river (now called Gadadhar, it separates modern day Assam from the West Bengal). Chila Ray extended the eastern portion of the kingdom into Assam and later declared independence from Kamata Koch Behar.<sup>39</sup>

The western kingdom, Kamta Koch Behar was then invaded at several times by the Mohamedans from Dacca, and at times paid tribute to other kingdoms but "was never absolutely subdued"<sup>40</sup> retaining its independence until 1773 when it became a semi-autonomous kingdom of British India. Thus fifteen independent kings ruled in Cooch Behar from 1510-1773 AD that is for 263 years and six feudatory chiefs ruled from 1773- 1949 AD that is for nearly 176 years. Thus, Biswa Singha's dynasty ruled in Cooch Behar for nearly 440 years.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, S.K.Chatterji's account of the historical unity of Bengal empire, which brought about 'the present unity of speech' is Bengal-centric emphasizing the periods of Bengal domination over

today's North Bengal, which Acharya (2000), Gait(1905) and Sanyal(1965) describe in which more limited terms. Chatterjee's misconstrues of the history of North Bengal is plausibly explained by the homogenous principle with an historical twist politics are normatively linguistically and culturally homogenous, and such homogeneity can be demonstrated by a unified political history.

The divergent opinions over, how to categories the political history of today's North Bengal leads to confusion over the status of literature generated under the Koch kings. Dharma Narayan Barma, however, vents his frustration at how scholars from Calcutta and Assam have both classified an early piece of Koch literature as belonging to their respective languages:-

“ The letter of Maharaja Naranarayan was written in 1555 AD to the Ahom king Ckukham Pha (Swargadev) represents well the ‘Kamatapuri’ language. And if this be taken as the first specimen of Bengali prose literature, as held by the Calcutta University, then naturally, confusion arises that Bengali prose literature generated from the womb of ‘kamatapur’ language... It is also very astonishing that scholars of Assam demand this letter.....to be the first visible sign of Assamiya prose literature. This awakens very naturally our contention where ‘Kamatapuri’ will go then”.<sup>42</sup>

### III

This linguistic issue led the people of Rajbanshi help to generate to form political and non-political organization to achieve the ultimate goal of separate State. In the last phase of sixties, Uttar Khanda

Dal (UKD) started movement for the development of North Bengal. At the initial stage the Uttar Khanda Dal (UKD) did not claim Rajbanshi language but later demanded 'Rajbanshi/ Kamatapuri' language for their own and lunched movement /strike/hartal in North Bengal.<sup>43</sup> Besides the UKD, large number of active and passive and signed- board and paper- type organizations have been flourished amongst the Rajbanshis. The most powerful and active organization is 'Uttar Banga Tapasili Jati O Adibasai Sangathan', (UTJAS). The UTJAS an ethno-based organization of the Rajbanshi people of North Bengal of West Bengal was established in 1979. During 1979 and 1989, the UTJAS tried to establish their claim on the socio-economic development and autonomy in North Bengal to their level best. However, it fiercely opposed the separate state demand but in some cases, their demands are identical with the UKD.<sup>44</sup> They demanded the recognition of 'Rajbanshi / Kamatapuri' language and introduction this language at primary level.<sup>45</sup> This is first time at the initial stage the linguistic issue has been raised by any non-political party in North Bengal. This issue added a new dimension in political activity among the Rajbanshi people in North Bengal. Afterwards, the Kamatapur Ganaparishad (1987) later known as Kamatapur Peoples' Party (KPP) also incorporated linguistic issue in their political activities. The student wing of the KPP viz., All Kamatapur Students' Union (AKSU) in the pattern of the All-Koch Rajbanshi Students Union (AKRASU) is established to propagate the linguistic programme throughout North Bengal. The KPP was influenced while the other linguistic groups viz., Garo, Khasi. Bodos have succeeded to fulfill their linguistic demands. Needless to say, on the basis of State Reorganization Commission (1953), creation of linguistic state viz., Nagaland (1962), Punjab (1966), Hariyana (1966), Himachal Pradesh (1971), Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Sikkim (1975), Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram (1987), Goa

(1987) and very recently Uttranchal, Chhatrisgarh and Jharkhand greatly inspired the KPP to organize movement for separate state viz., Kamatapur on linguistic basis. The KPP is determined to establish a separate Kamatapur state comprising the six districts of North Bengal including some portion of northern Bihar and lower Assam. They had submitted a memorandum in 1997 to Sri Indra Kumar Gujral the then Prime Minister of India containing 11 points of chartered demands in order to implement their demands for formation of the separate Kamatapur state.<sup>46</sup>

In order to crystallize their idea of separate state and language the All Koch- Rajbanshi Students' Union of Assam(AKRSU) has established contact with its counterpart i.e. Kamatapur Peoples' Party (Atul Ray faction) of North Bengal of West Bengal. The Koch Rajbanshi International (KRI), centre was founded for the same purpose. Though it's headquarter is located at Tejpur, the centre of action is established at Burirhat near Dinhata town of the Cooch Behar district. At the time of inauguration of this centre, Maharani Gayeetri Devi of Jaipur a Scion of Cooch Behar Royal family was presented.<sup>47</sup> Initially the Koch Rajbanshi International (KRI) was known as Bharatiya Koch Rajbanshi Kshatriya Mahasabha (BKRKM). In the second conference of BKRKM at Burirhat village of Dinhata subdivision of Cooch Behar district on 23-24 February 1986 BKRKM was renamed as the Koch Rajbanshi International (KRI). The KRI had deep concern for cultural-linguistic identity of the Koch Rajbanshis. It also demanded the reservation of 80% jobs for the Koch Rajbanshis in North Bengal, formation of a state in North Bengal and formation of a military regiment in the name of Chilarai. The KRI was strongly supported by the UKD, 'Kamata Rajya Parishad', 'Chilarai Sangha', 'All Assam Koch Rajbanshi Kshatriya Sammelan' and the 'Rajbanshi Bhasha Pracher Samity' of Nepal.<sup>48</sup>

Like the KRI, another political organization operated from Lower Assam called 'Bharatiya Kamata Rajya Parishad' (BKRP) began to mobilize the linguistic and cultural feelings of the Koch Rajbanshis. They demanded separate state namely Kamatapur for overall development of the Koch Rajbanshis of North Bengal and Lower Assam.<sup>49</sup> In addition to form of a separate state, its one of the demands was introduction of the 'Kamatapuri' as mother tongue in the primary level schools of North Bengal and establishment of research institution for the development of the Kamatapur language. The KPP also demanded for broadcasting of cultural programmes from Siliguri, Calcutta and Guwahati centers of the All India Radio.<sup>50</sup>

The KPP gets active support from the 'All Kamatapur Students Union' (AKSU), and the 'All Koch Rajbanshi Students Union' (AKRASU). The KPP and the AKSU are trying to mobilize the Koch Rajbanshi people by organizing mass rally and meeting, publishing books, etc. They also have established connection with the Greater Cooch Behar Democratic Party (GCDP).<sup>51</sup> The objectives of the AKRASU of Assam and KPP and GCDP of Cooch Behar are more or less remain same. For achieving their goal, they felt the necessity to form an umbrella organization. The result of their thinking has given the birth of an umbrella organization. They formed the Greater Kamata United Forum (GKUF) in 2006. For the first time in the history of the Rajbanshi after the creation of the province of Assam in 1874, we found a united organization of the Rajbanshi of Assam and West Bengal. Whether it will be worthwhile or not, it is undoubtedly a turning point in the history of the Rajbanshis of India. Both the Rajbanshi of Assam and West Bengal have successfully sorted their difference and are trying to remove it.

However, the founders of the Greater Kamata United Forum are not heavy weight, but still by taking the initiative for a joint organization, they have done the work of a primer history. It suggests us that this is a unique attempt on the part of the Rajbanshi of Assam and Bengal. How much it will be workable is a different issue. At least they have succeeded burying the divided identity, which created a hurdle for the growth of the united identity or community solidarity.

In order to create literary consciousness among the Rajbanshi people, the 'Kamatapur Sahitya Parishad' was formed. It has published a news magazine called 'Ratna Pitha' after the historical name of this region.<sup>52</sup> The UKD had also published journal called 'Northern Express'.<sup>53</sup> They advocated the use of 'Kamatapuri' language through the journal like '*Jagaran*', '*Pubali*', '*Kamata Katha*', '*Ayana*' etc. In village level many 'Yatra Parties' were formed and they staged the popular drama '*Maynar Chokher Jal*' in the 'Kamatapuri' language. The contents of the *Maynar Chokher Jal* were widely appreciated by the Rajbanshi people. Recently, films have been produced in 'Rajbanshi /Kamatapuri' language such as 'Teesta Parer Kainya', 'More Biyar Ful', 'Baudi More Ma' etc. The Rajbanshi intellectuals established a good number of cultural organizations in North Bengal to advocate their language viz., 'North Bengal Academy of Culture'(NBAC) at Sibmandir, Darjeeling, 'North Eastern Foundation for Social Science and Research'(NEFSSR) at Jalpaiguri, 'North Bengal Cultural Organization'(NBCO) at Tufanganj, 'Centre for Studies Local Language and Culture'(CSLLC) at Cooch Behar, 'Kamata Sahitya Sabha' (KSS), *Panchanan Smarak Samiti* at Jalpaiguri, 'Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samity', 'Panchanan Mission' at Kolkata etc. These organizations are trying to revive the linguistic issue. They are publishing periodicals, pamphlets, magazines etc. in

'Kamatapuri /Rajbanshi' language. The North Bengal Academy of Culture publishing a periodicals such as *Uttarabanga Maskia*, and a magazine called "DEGAR" (The Road) edited by Nikhilesh Roy. In addition to these, "Baghdhenuk", 'Raidak' etc have been published in 'Rajbanshi/ Kamatapuri' language to highlight the history, culture, language, anthropology, ecology and political affairs of the region from these cultural centers.

In Assam, the 'Koch Rajbanshi Sammilani' has been publishing 'Smriti Grantha' in Assamese script. Usually the Rajbanshis of Assam used to write Assamese script in their writings though they are demanding separate state. While in Nepal the 'Rajbanshi Bhasa Prachar Samity' is trying to establish Rajbanshi Language in *Devanagari* script and published bulletin regularly named "Rajbanshi." In Bihar, the Rajbanshis also used to write *Devanagari* script in their writings. In Bangladesh, the Rajbanshis are using Bengali script in their writings. All these trial may be regarded as a bold step to revive the Rajbanshi history, culture, language etc.

#### IV

From the above discussion, it is to be noted that though the Rajbanshis of North Bengal and Assam politically and culturally are trying to unite themselves, there is no homogeneity in linguistic issue among them. For example, in Nepal, the Nepali Government recognized the Rajbanshis language and they are using *Devanagari* script in their writings. In Bihar, there is no linguistic problem. They adopted Hindi script for their writings while in Assam the Rajbanshis used Assamese

script despite some of them demanded separate Kamatapur State. In Bangladesh Rajbanshi people are using Bengali script .There is no demand for separate language for themselves. However, in North Bengal there is a problem of linguistic identity. A section of Rajbanshi people formed a good number of political and non-political organizations to motivate the community to establish a separate Kamatapur state goal on the basis of language they speak i.e. Rajbanshi or 'Kamatapuri'. Apart from this, the Rajbanshi of North Bengal would not able to unite among themselves regarding the name of this language also. Some of them in favour of 'Kamatapuri' while some of them fashioned it as 'Rajbanshi'. This issue will lead another identity crisis to the future generation of the Rajbanshi community if the language consciousness will not be properly utilized as cultural consciousness.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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